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ABYSSINIA AS A FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED BOTH IN THE RE-SETTLEMENT OF THE SOUDÁN AND IN THE FUTURE OF THE RED SEA.

By V. FEDOROFF.

Translated from the Russian by Lieut.-Colonel W. E. GOWAN
(late Indian Army).

"In the coming partition of Africa, Abyssinia will naturally play an important part. To what European Power will the Ancient Empire of Ethiopia eventually belong? Will the Italians succeed in extending the firm footing they have gained in the Red Sea,¹ or will the French put in a claim from the side of Obock? Problems such as these are of the highest interest for those of us who try to live in the future as well as the past."
—*The Sacred City of the Ethiopians, being a record of Travel and Research in Abyssinia in 1893, by J. Theodore Bent, etc.*

THE beginning of the political life of Abyssinia is lost in the gloom of remote antiquity. She was one of the carriers of ancient civilisation, and, as such, was the equal of Egypt, Phœnicia, Assyria, Babylonia, Media, and Persia. Although no regular excavations have as yet been carried out in Abyssinia, yet, from not a few finds made, it is apparent that, in prehistoric ages, the civilisation of Abyssinia was not second even to that of Egypt, and there exist grounds for the belief that even during the lifetime of the constructors of the Pyramids culture in Ethiopia was at the same height as on the banks of the Nile. Later on, Egyptian civilisation took complete possession of Abyssinia, and traces of this are even now to be met with in Shoa. King Abrago-Dzu-Menar, who ascended the throne of Abyssinia in the year 1447 n.c., is the first historically accurate personage in Abyssinian chronicles. His descendant,

¹ The crushing defeat of Adowa and the dissipation of all dreams of Italian conquest and extension in this part of Africa, at least, have answered this question in the negative. As to the second question, the following announcement made from Odessa, under date September 16th, 1898, is of peculiar interest, since both French and Russian interests are as antagonistic to our own both in the Soudán and on the Red Sea littoral, as they are in China and the Far East generally:—"It is stated here that since the battle of Omdurmán lengthy and special instructions of a secret nature have been transmitted by the Russian Foreign Office to M. Vlassoff, the Russian political agent at Adis-Ababa. It is generally surmised that M. Vlassoff has been directed to offer certain advice to the Negus Menelek in the event of possible complications arising between Abyssinia and the Sirdár, should the latter push his power beyond given limits to the south and east of Khartoum."—W. E. G.

in the direct line, Goddat, died in 1008 B.C. He was succeeded by his daughter, Balkis, or the semi-legendary Queen of Saba or Sheba, who, according to Abyssinian stories, had a son, by King Solomon, named Menelek. During the whole of the pre-Christian period of her historical existence, Abyssinia was in continuous and close connection with Egypt, the Soudán, and Arabia proper. It was only from the time of Queen Balkis that Abyssinia entered into more or less intimate relations with the then powerful Judea. Thus the Menelek, above spoken of, went to Jerusalem for the purpose of being crowned King of Ethiopia, and from there he took back with him a copy of the Ark of the Covenant which stood in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple. This copy is still preserved in one of the churches of Aksum as the greatest of the sacred relics of antiquity. These relations with Judea exercised, however, but little influence on the religious beliefs of the Ethiopians, who remained, as before, Pagans, or more probably, Sabceans, *i.e.*, worshippers of the heavens and the various constellations, and in this they resembled their neighbours, the inhabitants of Arabia proper. Only a few of the Abyssinians became adherents of the Mosaic Law. There are reasons too for the belief that the Phœnicians, who traded along the coasts of the Red Sea, introduced their cult and their divinity (Ezion-Geber, for example) into Abyssinia. During the heavy days which overtook Judea, masses of Jews emigrated to Abyssinia, where, under the name of *Fallashas*, *Fendjas*, *Tsalans*, they have, even until now, preserved, in a remarkable degree of purity, their own type, language, belief, and customs. The descendants of King Menelek ruled over Abyssinia up to the year 584 B.C.

The ecclesiastical traditions of the country tell us that Christianity was introduced into Abyssinia by the Apostle St. Philip, but it is more credible to suppose that it was introduced by St. Frumentius. Kings Edesius and Elezvoi may also be justly called the Apostles of Abyssinia. In the year 331 A.D., Saban ascended the throne and he announced Christianity to be the State religion of Abyssinia. Abyssinian Kings had also endeavoured to carry the light of the Christian faith far beyond the limits of their own country, and the campaign of St. Elezvoi across the sea into the deserts of Arabia may be called the first Crusade of the Cross in the East. But however weak the Abyssinian Church itself may have been, it might, in dependence on its own strength, have carried Christianity into Central Africa, had not the triumphant creed of Islám prevented it from doing so. Subordinating herself, in a spiritual sense, to the Church of Alexandria, Abyssinia took an active part in all the religious struggles of the first ages of Christianity, and in so doing was always on the side of her own Metropolitan. In the fifth century A.D., Eutyches, who dwelt at Alexandria, began to teach that Jesus Christ possessed but the one nature—the Divine—and in this way he laid the foundation of the heresy of the *Monophysites*. The Egyptian Church was at that time ruled over by the Patriarch Diaskor, and after him the Abyssinian Church accepted his teaching; but almost the whole of the rest of the Christian world, especially the Byzantine Church, in the

person of Flavianus, Patriarch of Constantinople, rose in opposition to it. In the year 449 A.D., Diaskor assembled, at Ephesus, a local council, better known under the name of "the robbers' council," whereat Flavianus was practically condemned to death. In 451 A.D., at Chalcedon an Œcumenical Council was convened under the presidentship of the Patriarch Anatolius, and by it Eutyches and Diaskor were unanimously censured. The Monophysites refused to acknowledge this decree and also the decision of a fifth Œcumenical Council held in 553 A.D., and declared themselves to be the sole true body of Christians. They then formed themselves into the special Coptic Church of Alexandria. In consequence of the religious intolerance of those times Byzantium and the Western Christians broke off all relations with Abyssinia, and so even her very existence was quickly forgotten. Although the Abyssinian people and the Copts, with whom they had united themselves, were excommunicated by the Œcumenical Council and although they had outwardly become Monophysites, yet they did not altogether forsake the chief dogmas of the Apostolic Faith, and therefore did not completely embrace the teaching of the Coptic heretics.

At this period Abyssinia stood at the highest point in her economic and spiritual development. The written laws of to-day are witnesses to this fact. Stretching from the Nile to Cape Guardafui, occupying the plateaux of Kassa and Harrar, embracing also a portion of the great lake basins of the Egyptian Soudán, and with uninterrupted access to the Red Sea, Abyssinia at that time appeared as a most powerful African State, and served as the medium of communication between the West and Eastern Africa and the Indies beyond. The ports of Massowah, Zeula, Assab, Tajura, and Zeila were crowded with vessels from India, Arabia, and other countries, whilst large caravans unceasingly traversed the now inhospitable province of Samhara and the country of the Afaras.

After a brief possession of political power, in the eighth century—that epoch of political and religious disturbances, brought about by Muhammad and his heirs—there set in for Abyssinia heavy days. The Arabs invaded Egypt, and soon afterwards semi-barbarous Mussulmán races poured over the whole of Abyssinia; and though she, after a long struggle, succeeded in standing out for her independence, she was cut off from the sea, and was thus destined to undergo a period of stagnation and of intellectual degeneration. It may, however, be said that Abyssinia checked the triumphant advance of Islám in the centre of Africa, and arrested it, too, on the south-east just as Spain did on the north-west. Cut off from the whole world during the course of many centuries, Ethiopia stood alone trusting wholly to her own weak powers, and this without hope of brighter times. It cannot be otherwise, therefore, than surprising that under such terrible conditions Abyssinia should not only have preserved her independence, but should have also maintained, in its pristine purity, her faith, customs, language, and nationality. For this she was, of course, indebted above all to the stability of those religious foundations which had been laid by St. Frumentius, Elezvoi, Edesius, and other apostles of the Abyssinian Church. The same firmness and devotion

to their ancient faith were displayed by the Abyssinian people not only in their struggle with the Jews, but with that Western European propaganda which, almost from the twelfth century, had begun to invade Ethiopia. As far as she could do so, Abyssinia steadily endeavoured to draw near to her own brethren in the faith, as she so regarded Greeks, Muscovites, and other Eastern Christians; and she more than once sent her envoys to Europe, and even to Russia; but what could she do if her elder brethren remained blind and deaf to the requests of their younger brethren? Having vigorously declared themselves at the Florentine Council to be the adherents of orthodoxy and not Latin schismatics, the Abyssinians could not expect from the Western Church other aid than that of missionary propagandists, whom they did not desire even to know. From the tenth century the Abyssinians had become the sworn foes of Islám, the authoress of the decay of their fatherland. The further history of Abyssinia is a record of bloody and merciless wars with Mussulmán on the north and west, and with Gallas on the south. In the thirteenth century the dynasty of Zagei came to an end, and in the year 1300 A.D., King Yakob-Amlos, the founder of the third reigning house of Abyssinia, transferred his capital from Aksum to Ankobar, but the close proximity of the warlike Gallas compelled King Constantine-Tsera to again transfer the capital northwards to Gondar. Constantine-Tsera was the first King of Abyssinia to adopt the title of Negus.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century happy days once more set in for Abyssinia. Authority, which had been shaken by internal disorders, became somewhat strengthened, so that the people could devote themselves to their occupations without being in momentary dread of the invasion of Mussulmán fanatics in the form of Arabs from the north and Gallas from the south. Accordingly, in the year 1429 A.D., the Negus Isaac made an attempt to establish relations with the rest of the Christian world. And so he despatched an embassy to France with an offer of alliance, for the purpose of eradicating Islám, and in order to show the possibility of carrying out such an intention he destroyed several of the neighbouring Mussulmán tribes. In France the idea was taken up seriously, and it was only the death of the enterprising Negus which interfered with the conclusion of an offensive alliance between France and Abyssinia.

Nearly a century afterwards the King of Portugal, John III., having casually heard of the existence of such a country as Abyssinia, sent thither, with religious and trading objects, a numerous and brilliant embassy. In the year 1525 A.D., the Negus Claudius-Atsнова-Sahet received this embassy in a specially cordial manner, and entered into negotiations with it. He, at the same time, sent an envoy to the Florentine Republic. Meanwhile the Catholic missionary, Bermudez, who had come with the King of Portugal's embassy, was soon consecrated *Abuna* of Abyssinia, a position which gives the holder the highest spiritual rank. The successor of Bermudez, indeed, became the spiritual head of Ethiopia, and as such was completely independent of

the Coptic Church. Had the work of subordinating Abyssinia to the Papal throne been continued gradually it would have been secured for all time. But unexpectedly, and with the object of diffusing the teaching of Islám, the Gallas raided into Abyssinia and carried fire and sword throughout the whole country, burning many of the towns, and amongst the number the ancient sacred city of Aksum.¹ Claudius fled, whereupon serious danger threatened the State. The last Christian sovereignty in Africa came near to complete overthrow, when 400 noble knight-errants of Portugal, under the leadership of Christopher Gama, son of the famous navigator, conceived it to be their duty to proceed to the assistance of the Abyssinian Christians. With the aid of some natives they inflicted a terrible defeat on the Gallas. The inspirited Abyssinians took up arms, and soon not a single foe remained in the country. Abyssinia thus once more preserved her independence, but her prosperity had received a decisive blow, and the influence of her sovereigns was finally shattered.

The Portuguese, as a thanksgiving offering for their aid, demanded various privileges and the complete subjection of the Abyssinian Church to the Pope of Rome. The Negus found that he could not oppose these demands, and so Jesuits flooded the country and began their usual intrigues; and although their first mission ended in the flight of its members, a second got the upper hand of the *Abuna* in 1603, when the Negus Fatselid and his family were compelled to embrace Catholicism. In 1624 the "King of Kings" triumphantly repudiated Monophysitism for himself and his people, and in order that Papism might be the more securely established, the Inquisition was instituted in Abyssinia. After the lapse of from eight to ten years Abyssinia was officially declared to have passed into the bosom of the Holy Catholic Faith; but, by degrees, the Abyssinian people, roused by the concessions of the Negus and by the severities of the Jesuits, rose in rebellion, whereupon complete anarchy took possession of the country. The greater portion of the Jesuits were slaughtered, and the rest fled out of the country. In 1641 the advent into Abyssinia of any Portuguese was finally forbidden. Although by the edict of the Negus Claudius a certain degree of religious tolerance was allowed, the ancient religion of the country was, at the same time, re-established.

The architectural relics of Portuguese residence in Abyssinia are now but few. The beautiful bridge across the Mahetch, without which communication between Gondar and the southern provinces of the country would be interrupted for five months in each year; the ruins of several churches and seminaries at Adowa; the small village on the Talba-Wakha, inhabited by descendants of the Portuguese, are now the sole remaining traces of Portuguese tyrannical rule over Abyssinia.

Ever since this unhappy country, harassed by external foes and torn by internal discord, has fallen lower and lower, until at length disintegration has shown itself with still greater persistence. With the weakening of the authority of the ruling Negus the influence of the several vassals has

¹ "The Sacred City of the Ethiopians, etc.," by Theodore Bent.

been in the ascendant, so that the Abyssinia of to-day appears as a house divided against itself, and religious uniformity is now the sole bond of union in the country. In the middle of the past century the Negus Josiah-Joas endeavoured to re-establish the ancient power of Abyssinia, but after his death the decay of the country set in with renewed force until, at last, in the beginning of the present century, when the Negus Gadtsege died, Abyssinia was split up into several small principalities which were always at enmity with each other, except in the face of danger from without. Thus, in the sixteenth century, besides the enfeebled Arabs, there appeared on the borders of Abyssinia Turkish Osmánli, who, having established themselves in Egypt, and in Arabia in 1557, seized Massowah and a portion of the Abyssinian coast-line. Since then the port of Massowah has passed from hand to hand, now of the Arabs, then of the English, Egyptians, and Italians, and so Abyssinia has been cut off from the sea and has been shut up in her own mountains, especially since the Arab principality of Harrar has become more firmly established to the south of Ethiopia. Since the 16th century Abyssinia has waged more than one war for the purpose of regaining possession of an exit to the open sea, and for the purpose of effecting this through the port of Massowah.

In the beginning of the present century, France made efforts to open up regular trading relations with Abyssinia, and for that purpose she, in 1839, sent two officers of the General Staff, Galinier and Ferre. These officers carried out many valuable scientific observations, but the direct object of their mission was not attained.

But soon there entered into the political arena a man, in the highest degree gifted, with a firm will but possessed of strong vices, which were, for a time, kept in check by the salutary influence of Europeans—a man who, however, knew how to re-unite the different portions of Abyssinia and who was destined to make the whole of Europe speak about him. This was the Negus Theodore. The history of this remarkable man is deserving of mention in a more detailed manner. He was born in the province of Kaura in 1818, and sprang from a good family. His original name was Lii-Cassa. His childhood was passed in the monastery of Debra-Jabner, where he devoted himself to the study of theology, and the history of his fatherland. He was deeply moved when he perceived the striking contrast between the greatness of the past and the pitiable present condition of his country. His stay in the monastery could not but afford him opportunity for reflection: a profound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, a deep belief in his own destiny, and a no less intense hatred towards Islám, were the results of Theodore's stay in the monastery of Debra-Jabner. Whilst yet a youth he quitted the monastery, and through the high position of his uncle, the ruler of the provinces of Kaura, Dambea, and Chelga, he was appointed to a very prominent position in the Amhara Army. At that time Amhara was ruled over by the weak-minded Ras-Ali, but he was ruler only in name, since all power was in the hands of his mother, the proud and ambitious Minena. Possessed of a noble exterior and endowed with courage and

intelligence, the young Lii-Cassa rapidly advanced and speedily attracted the attention of the still middle-aged Queen Minena. Just about this time his uncle died, and he became ruler of the province of Kaura. But the young ruler, who was thirsting for a more active life, was not satisfied with his position and began to conspire against Ras-Ali. This weak-minded personage became frightened, and without bringing matters to a decisive encounter, as a mark of his attitude towards Cassa he gave him the hand of his young daughter Tuavitch in marriage. This first wife exercised an immense and a thoroughly beneficial influence over him by curbing the savage side of his character. Impelled by his hatred towards the Muhammadans, Lii-Cassa made ceaseless raids on the neighbouring Soudánese tribes—a course of action which enabled him to keep up a large army and to increase the number of his own adherents. His constant successes then led him into a campaign against Egypt, but at Goderafa he suffered a severe defeat and was badly wounded. Queen Minena, who well understood what a danger to the ruling dynasty lay in the ambitious Cassa, thought that the favourable moment had arrived for putting him out of the way, and so she made ready to war against him. Cassa having become aware of her preparations hastened to defend himself, and in 1848 he declared himself the independent ruler of Kaura. Queen Minena on several occasions sent her troops against him, but he always defeated them, and finally, in 1852, he assumed the offensive. After encountering the troops of Ras-Ali at Duyazilla, he scattered them and succeeded in capturing both the King and Queen. A succession of successful campaigns on the part of Cassa against the smaller Abyssinian princes culminated in an engagement before Derezgii, where he defeated and captured Ubie, the King of Tigrè (on the 10th February, 1855). This made Cassa the sole ruler of Abyssinia. Subsequently, under the name of Fadrusha or Theodore, he triumphantly assumed at Aksum the ancient crown of Abyssinia, and at the same time took the title of "Negus-Negusta," "King of Kings" or Emperor. The change in his name was called for by the circumstance that, according to an old prophecy much in vogue amongst the people, the power and glory of Abyssinia was to be restored by a sovereign whose name should be Theodore.

On ascending the throne, Theodore first of all adopted measures for the pacification of his dismembered country, and issued a proclamation in which he announced that "Everyone should return to the occupation of his forefathers, the casual soldier to his plough, the merchant to his bales, and so on." Every effort too was made to eradicate the freebooters who had devastated the country, and into the pursuit of these pests Theodore entered with peculiar severity. To this period¹ belongs the first bloody episode in the reign of Theodore. Putting faith in the words of the Negus's proclamation, the inhabitants of Tirza appeared before the Emperor, armed from head to foot, and asked for permission, in accordance with his order, to continue the calling of their fathers and grandfathers.

¹ According to Lejean.

"What sort of calling?" inquired the Negus.

"Of highwaymen and robbers," was the answer.

"Do you wish," said the Negus, restraining his anger with difficulty, "to become honest people? If so, I will give you some of my own territory and the necessary agricultural implements and horned cattle. But what then?"

"Never," was the reply; "our demands are in accordance with the Emperor's own proclamation."

"Is that your last word?" inquired Theodore.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Very well," said the Negus. "Return to your homes."

But the robbers never saw their homes again, for by Theodore's orders they were attacked on the way by soldiers, and several hundreds of them were shot down. With the remarkable persistence which distinguished this man of iron character, Theodore began to overhaul every department of the administration of his country. He turned his special attention towards lessening the decentralisation of power. He established tribunals, forbade slavery, organised a standing army, improved all the road communications, put all the industries on a proper footing, and for this purpose he introduced from Europe skilled craftsmen, and he lowered all customs dues, etc.

The German traveller Heiglin, who visited Abyssinia in 1861-62, gives the following description of the Negus, and of his working day:—"From early morning till late at night the Emperor is engaged in judicial and administrative business, and with military affairs, and the observance of religious ceremonies. Every detail of government is gone into by himself. Long before sunrise scores of petitioners are collected before the chain of sentinels which surround the Emperor's tent,¹ and call out 'Abet!' 'Abet!' or 'Dusan-lai' (Sovereign), hear us! The Negus then rises from his couch, hears the several requests and complaints, and straightway pronounces his punishments or his clemency. Then there begins a long reception of despatches and of messengers, and then the patrols bring forward the robbers and spies and other disturbers of law and order, who have been captured during the previous night. The carrying out of the sentences on these persons takes place on the spot without any very lengthy preliminaries. Theodore bears the character of being just, magnanimous, and generous, but withal extremely strict. By his iron hand alone can his people be ruled, for he knows their character well. The Negus dresses as simply as the rest of his countrymen. He either goes about barefooted, or wears wooden sandals. A splendid shot and horseman, he places himself at the head of his troops in every engagement. Europeans he respects, and he places a high value on their culture, knowledge, and inventive genius."

So writes a traveller who cannot be suspected of partiality, but who, at the same time, has forgotten to depict the bad side of the Negus's character, and yet the subject of his remarks was a man who was one born

¹ Theodore did not like town life, and during almost the whole of his reign he lived either in a tent or in a hastily constructed military camp.

for the time in which he lived, passionate, impulsive, often unduly severe, and always proud and self-opiniated.

The majority of the reforms introduced by Theodore were under the influence of two Europeans—the English Consul at Massowah, Plowden, and another Englishman of the name of Bell. These were two of his personal friends, men who were absolutely honest, and who were at the same time deeply devoted to him. Their salutary influence restrained the outbursts of the savage nature of the Negus, and directed and kept him to his good undertakings.

There set in a period, in fact, in which Abyssinia, peaceful within and undisturbed from without, could breathe freely. To this period (1855) relates—according to the French Consul at Massowah, Lejean—the despatch by the hands of some Russian tourist of the letter from Theodore to the Emperor Nicholas, in which he offered an alliance against Turkey and Egypt; but to this letter no answer was ever sent. And yet relations between Russia and Abyssinia had been entered into long before those of any of the maritime Powers. Soon after the fall of Byzantium, envoys of the Negus and monks of Abyssinia had more than once appeared at Moscow with letters from the Negus containing offers of every kind. But Russia was at that time far away from Abyssinia, even though that country looked towards her as the protectress of her ancient religion and as the defender of the Christianity which she had inherited from Byzantium.

Towards the end of 1855 an insurrection broke out in Tigre and Hodjama, and although it was put down in its very inception, its leaders continued to hold out in the inaccessible gorges of Simen and Hodjama up to the year 1860. During this year, Theodore's cousin, Hared, one of the best knight-errants of the country, set up the standard of revolt. Theodore undertook a campaign against him. Plowden, who accompanied the Negus, becoming weary of this campaigning life, started off to visit an illustrious Abyssinian matron, with whom he desired to ally himself, but on the road Hared's adherents fell upon him and mortally wounded him. Theodore swore a terrible oath that he would be avenged for the death of his friend. Soon afterwards a detachment of Theodore's army encountered Hared's band of followers in the valley of the Cheber. Hared, spying through a beautiful telescope which had been the property of Plowden, saw the Negus riding at the head of his officers. He then threw the telescope to the ground with such force that it broke into small pieces, and with arms in his hands he galloped towards his enemy. Bell advanced with the object of covering the Negus with his own body, and with a shot from his rifle killed Hared, but he was at that very moment brought to the ground by Hared's brother, who was then killed by Theodore. After this short but bloody encounter the leaders of Hared's demoralised followers surrendered without further resistance, to the number of 1,700 men. Burning with revenge, the Negus ordered them to be taken to Debarek, and there to be beheaded and their bodies to be thrown aside without burial; and this was done. On the death of his two friends Theodore remained, so to speak, without moral tutelage. It was

about this time, too, that the wise and gentle Tuavitch died. She was the last true friend of the Negus, whose future mad character, having no longer any reins, began to show itself in all its innate strength. He then became suspicious, revengeful, and bloodthirsty. He took also to drink and debauchery, and, in a word, he became intractable.

At this period he had reached the zenith of his power. But everywhere there sets in a sharp turn to the evil-disposed. The numerical strength of his army and of his retainers' wives, and children had reached, according to the assurance of many eye-witnesses, the enormous figures of 400,000 souls. The maintenance of this unproductive mass of human beings devastated the country. The recent severity of the Negus had aroused general dissatisfaction, and thus the ground for his enemies was made ready. Rebellions broke out in every direction, and for the putting down of these towns and villages were reduced to ashes and victims were exterminated. Some entire provinces, as in the time of the old inroads of the Gallas, became depopulated and large tracts were no longer cultivated. With the falling away of the economic prosperity of the country and, as a consequence, the diminution of his resources and the numerical strength of his army, the support of Theodore's authority dwindled away and fell into disruption. Soon therefore, in order to maintain about his own person his immediate adherents, the Negus was obliged to pillage even those provinces which had remained faithful to him.

Meanwhile in England the death of Plowden had become known, and a new Consul, in the person of Captain Cameron, was sent out. Cameron received fully-detailed instructions not to interfere, as his predecessor had done, in the internal affairs of the country, and to occupy himself entirely with the study of the products of Abyssinia and with the establishment of trade relations with her. On the 7th October, 1862, the new Consul was received in state by the Negus, and in November of the same year he was sent off with a letter from Theodore to Queen Victoria. At the same time the Frenchman Bardel, who had been an accountant at Suez, went off with a similar letter to the Emperor Napoleon. In these letters Theodore proposed an alliance for the overthrow of Islâm, and also asked for the despatch to himself of military instructors, mechanics, and craftsmen. For us, Russians, the circumstance is noteworthy that Theodore turned towards England and France with these proposals only after his attempt to draw to himself an alliance with Orthodox Russia had proved unsuccessful. Cameron fell sick on the way, and sent Theodore's letter on to Aden, whence it was despatched to England by post. To this letter no sort of importance was attached in England, and it was not even considered worth answering. In France they behaved towards the Negus with somewhat greater politeness, for Bardel returned with an answer, not indeed from the Emperor Napoleon himself, but from his Minister, M. Drouen d'Élouys.

Theodore was so enraged with such discourtesy towards himself that he placed the French Consul Lejean in chains, but he soon afterwards released him and ordered him to at once quit the country. Cameron

only escaped similar treatment by assuring the Negus that an answer from the Queen would soon arrive. From that time forward the Negus began to be badly disposed towards Europeans.

At this time Bardel reported to Theodore that Doctor Sterne, the head of the English Spiritual Mission, had, during his visit to Europe, published papers about Abyssinia in which he, the Emperor, was spoken of with extreme contumely, whilst his mother was called a vendor of *koussou* (a vegetable product used in cases of tape-worm and other intestinal parasites). This was the drop which caused the cup of the Negus's fury to overflow. Sterne and his colleagues were beaten and thrown into prison.

At the close of 1863, Captain Cameron, instead of the long-expected answer from Queen Victoria to Theodore's letter, received an order to at once rejoin his post at Massowah. Then the deeply-affronted Negus ordered Cameron also and the Europeans who were with him to be loaded with chains and to be cast into prison.

When in March, 1864, news reached England of the fate which had befallen Cameron and the missionaries, Theodore's letter at last received attention, and it was decided to send him an answer, signed by the Queen, through an envoy, who was to request him to free the captives. The Armenian Ormuzd Rassam, was selected as the envoy. He was a colleague of the English Resident at Aden, and a man who was well acquainted with the East. Rassam waited for a whole year at Massowah for the Negus's permission to proceed to the interior of Abyssinia, and at length, in January, 1866, he arrived, and together with his colleague, Lieutenant Prideaux, and the famous traveller Palgrave, presented himself before the Negus and handed to him the Queen's letter, and some very shabby presents. At first the Negus received this embassy very well and immediately ordered the release of the Europeans. But in the course of a few days a sharp change in Theodore's demeanour occurred, and all the Europeans, including the members of the embassy, were once more arrested and sent off to Magdála, where they were allowed to move about, but in chains. The cause of this fresh ill-treatment of the Europeans was, it was supposed, that Theodore expected an envoy of higher rank than Rassam and in the deputation of so unimportant an official he justly saw disrespect towards himself. Besides this, amongst the number of the gifts sent to him there was found a carpet, on which was depicted a hunting scene of the famous French sportsman Gerard, in pursuit of a lion. Now the lion is on the escutcheon of the Kings of Ethiopia. The suspicious Negus saw, in this circumstance, an allegory. In his opinion he himself was the lion and Gerard was meant to typify Egypt, the oppressor of Abyssinia. After lengthy debates in the British Parliament and endless discussions in the English newspapers, the British Government sent to Theodore, through the missionary Fleyd,¹ an ultimatum containing peremptory demands that he should send all the prisoners to

¹ Fleyd had been sent from Abyssinia with a fresh letter from the Negus in which he again asked that mechanics, craftsmen, machinery, and military instructors might be sent to him.

Massowah by the 17th August, 1866, and threatening him with an armed invasion of his country should he refuse to do so. This demand was not complied with, and so war with Abyssinia became unavoidable. A Special Commission was then formed under the leadership of Colonel Merewether for the investigation of the approaches to Abyssinia from the shores of the Red Sea. As we have already said in our geographical review, Abyssinia is separated from that sea by the waterless, sultry, and unhealthy desert of Samhara, wherein the heat usually reaches to 54° Réaumur in the shade. In its northern part, that is, in the neighbourhood of the gulf of Massowah, the above desert is scarcely wider than 50 kilometres, but it gradually widens towards the south in the parallel of Tajurah, where it reaches to 350 kilometres in breadth. The southern ports of Tajurah, Assab (in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb), and Edd (on the Red Sea) were, therefore, held to be impracticable as places for the debarkation of troops. There remained then for consideration, Massowah, Annesley Bay (Adula), and Hanfilla (the ancient Antifillus). But at Massowah there was an Egyptian garrison,¹ and a joint occupation of this port might lead to serious misunderstandings. Although Hanfilla possesses an excellent anchorage, the desert littoral at this place is considerably wider than elsewhere. The Commission therefore decided on the selection of Annesley Bay. Towards the end of October, 1867, the advanced part of the British force disembarked at Zoulla, and there on the shore, immediately facing the Abyssinian mountains, was established the British dépôt, whence a line of railway was carried to the very foot of the plateau.

The whole of the expedition of 1867-68 presents a brilliant page in the military history of Europe, one indeed not remarkable for any unusual exploits of the troops or of individual persons, but for a rare display of foresight and capable organisation, especially in the leadership of the whole campaign. The British had not, properly speaking, to war with peoples, but to combat at every step with nature, and with the unfavourable natural conditions of the country through which they had to pass. The western part of Annesley Bay is very shallow, and this necessitated the construction of a mole. There was no supply of fresh water, so condensing machines had to be set up. Forage and provisions were not procurable at any of the adjacent ports, and everything in this shape had to be brought from either India or Europe. No roadways existed to the Abyssinian table-land, and these had therefore to be constructed with the greatest amount of labour. The severe heat and the increasing fatigue which the troops had to undergo caused sickness to be rife, and this necessitated the construction of numerous hospitals and camp lazarettos. In a word, the British had, at every step, to contend against obstacles of every kind; but knowledge, skill, a vast display of labour, and enormous expenditure of money enabled them to surmount every impediment. The Expeditionary Force consisted of 4,000 British and 8,000 native troops, with 24 guns, 2 mortars, and 16 rocket stands. The

¹ Between 1557 and 1865, Massowah and Suakim belonged to Turkey, but in the latter year they were sold with the co-operation of England to Egypt.

commander of this body of men was General Sir Robert Napier, who had distinguished himself in the Chinese War of 1860. The armament of the British troops consisted of Snider breech-loaders, that of the native troops was the old muzzle-loading rifle. Besides the 12,000 combatants, there were with the force 14,000 non-combatants. The pack transport reached the portentous total of 40,000 animals, including 45 elephants, which were chiefly used for the transport of the artillery over the mountain tracks.

By the 5th December, 1867, Colonel Merewether had reached the Abyssinian frontier with a small body of men and had occupied Senafe. At this time Theodore, whose possessions were now limited to the confines of his camp and to a few forts, moved from the monastery of Debra-Tabor to the inaccessible fortress of Magdála, lying on the highlands of the Beshilo river, and here he decided to give battle to the advancing British force.

The British troops, after constructing a road and establishing various fortified posts, gradually moved forward to the above objective. Throughout the whole extent of country from Zoulla to the uplands of the Beshilo river the British met with not the slightest opposition, notwithstanding that on their line of operations there were the rulers of Tigrè, Kasai, and Lasta and the Gobazi, who together could dispose of 100,000 fighting-men, a force which would have constituted for any defeated British troops a serious danger. But the natives of the country met the British not as foes, but as deliverers, and as people who had come to put an end to the barbarities and to the arbitrary deeds of a blood-stained tyrant such as Theodore had of late become. Indeed, they aided the British in every possible way, supplying them with provisions, forage, and both pack and slaughter animals.

On the 10th April, 1868, the British crossed the Beshilo river and ascended the plateau of Arraga, in the neighbourhood of Magdála. Here occurred the first encounter with Theodore's troops, who suffered a terrible defeat.¹

After long conferences and the display of much vacillation, the Negus, in obedience to the demands of Sir Robert Napier, released all the Europeans whom he had imprisoned, but declined to surrender his own person. He at the same time executed 300 political offenders, whom he had incarcerated at this time within the fortress of Magdála. He did so by hurling them from the top of the lofty crag. The imprisoned Europeans barely escaped the same fate.

Having lost all hope of inflicting a defeat on his enemy, during the night of the 13th April the Negus released all his troops from their oath

¹ According to official information the British lost in this engagement one soldier killed and one officer and 11 rank and file wounded. Whereas the Abyssinians lost 800 men in killed and 1,500 in wounded. The information as to the Abyssinian losses was evidently exaggerated. The British fired 18,000 rifle cartridges, and the number of hits being recorded as 2,300, or 13 per cent., the supposed Abyssinian losses would therefore be much above the usual experience of war.

of allegiance and dismissed them, and he himself, attended by four of his leading men and by a few devoted soldiers, made an attempt to escape towards the south ; but in that direction the Gallas were keeping a strict watch, and he was compelled to turn back. In the early morning the British advanced to the storming of Magdála. The Negus with his dozen or so of adherents could not of course offer any sort of serious opposition, and so Magdála was captured. But the proud Theodore did not surrender himself to his enemy, preferring to blow his brains out with a pistol shot.

Thus terminated the life of a capable and energetic ruler, who, under other circumstances, might have called Abyssinia to new life and have led her into the circle of civilised nations. This was indeed the dream of his life.

Whilst giving every just meed of praise to the surprising display of exemplary organisation which attended the British expedition, it cannot but be said that the causes of its easy and brilliant successes are to be exclusively accounted for in the absence of any wish on the part of the Abyssinians to offer resistance. The British, in fact, did for the Negus only that which his people were desirous of doing for themselves. The example of the Italians, equipped with the improved resources which modern military science now offers, and yet unable to successfully contend against even a small body of Abyssinian troops or to advance a single step out of Massowah, shows that a struggle with the Abyssinia of to-day is not an easy matter even for a European army.

Thanks to Sir Robert Napier's brilliant expedition the Europeans had been released, the honour of England had been re-established, and she had once more shown to the world that she knows how to make her name "honoured and feared as of old." After attaining their object the British completely evacuated Abyssinia without interfering in any way in the internal affairs of the country. Kasai, the ruler of Tigrè, who had rendered them special services, was liberally loaded with gifts, which principally consisted of arms.

On the departure of the English, a troublous time again set in in Abyssinia. As pretenders to the ancient crown of Menelek, three persons came forward: Menelek, ruler of Shoa; Gobazi, the petty ruler of Lasta; and Kasai, ruler of Tigrè. The last-named got the upper hand, and he, in 1870, ascended the throne of Abyssinia, under the title of John IV. He reigned prosperously, thanks to his tact and diplomatic skill.

The first years of the reign of Negus John passed in his efforts to pacify the country, which had been agitated and wasted by recent events. But in the year 1872, disputes arose between Egypt and Abyssinia, on account of the border provinces.

Egypt just at that time exalted by the famous Mehemet-Ali, proud of his successes and conquests, was in the highest grade of her prosperity, a condition which called to remembrance, as to external appearances, the brilliant times of the Pharaohs. The Khedive of Egypt, having just conquered the Soudán, had become one of the powerful rulers of the

world, in regard to the size of his African possessions, territory which stretched from the Sahara up to Palestine in Arabia proper, and from the mouths of the Nile as far as the countries of the great lakes and the sources of the Congo. Egyptian garrisons occupied the ports of Arabia proper, and of the Abyssinian coast-line. Harrar itself and Somaliland had been incorporated in the possessions of Egypt, which surrounded, in fact, little Abyssinia on every side. Indeed, it seemed as though Egypt was ready to engulf the ancient Ethiopia.

Weakened as she was by internal disorders, it appeared that Abyssinia was not in a position to maintain a struggle against flourishing and powerful Egypt. Indeed, Negus John had turned in vain with a request for aid towards England and France. To the same period (1874) relates, too, another unsuccessful attempt on the part of Abyssinia to enter into close relations with Russia. But the apprehensions of John were groundless, and, left entirely to herself, Abyssinia issued with honours out of the struggle. At the close of the year 1875 a body consisting of 30,000 excellently-equipped regular Egyptian troops, armed with Remington rifles and furnished with a large complement of artillery, advanced from Kassala along the banks of the Mareb river on Aksum, the ancient capital of Ethiopia. In the neighbourhood of the small hamlet of Gundet the Abyssinians, armed almost entirely with weapons of cold steel, fell upon them, and in the course of a bloody fight, which lasted for three days, destroyed the entire Egyptian force, capturing the 30,000 Remington rifles and 100 guns. Arakel Bey and Arendruk, the two commanders of the Egyptian army, perished, together with thousands of their soldiers. To this day the bones of the Egyptian soldiery lie whitening amidst the herbage of the hamlet of Gundet. In 1876 there came to Abyssinia a second Egyptian army, for the purpose of avenging the disastrous operations of the previous campaign. This army was under the leadership of Prince Hassan, son of the Khedive Ismail. Having gained possession of the plateau of Hamassen, the Egyptians fortified themselves on the inaccessible position of Gura. There the Abyssinians fell upon them, and after a desperate fight they once more almost entirely destroyed a whole Egyptian army corps, again capturing the whole of its artillery and a large number of rifles. The Egyptian Pashas were taken prisoners, and it is said that the triumphant Abyssinians made on the hands of some of them the sign of the Cross. Thus, an Egyptian campaign, which had threatened to make of Abyssinia a Mussulmán satrapy, terminated in the complete victory of the Christians. With the same bravery, too, did the Danakili fight against the Egyptians for their independence. This tribe had always at critical moments espoused the cause of Abyssinia. Thus, in 1840, they destroyed a body of Arabs which had advanced from Zeila towards Aussa, and it was, too, under the spears of the Danakili that the Pasha Muntsinger, with a body of Egyptian soldiers, fell in 1875, when they thought that they could traverse the desert of Samhara to the mountains of Shoa.

Soon after the catastrophe of Gura, the Abyssinians began to dictate to Egypt their own terms; they began by demanding the rendition of

the Soudán and Nubia and the payment of an indemnity of £2,000,000. Subsequently they confined their demands to the money contribution only, and until payment of this was made they kept the Egyptian Pashas as hostages. It was, therefore, on the fields of Gundet and of Gura that the bright star of the recently exalted Egypt began first to wane. Subsequent military failures and terrible waste of the country's finances, coupled with insurrections and the exactions of Europeans, soon reduced Egypt to beggary and brought the country of the Pharaohs into the hands of English creditors.

In 1876 Abyssinia made a third attempt in the course of the present century to enter into brotherly relations with Russia, but this attempt was likewise a failure. Russia was then preparing for another war with Turkey and far-off Abyssinia interested no one.¹ Four years after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, one of the highest personages in Abyssinia, through the medium of an Oriental professor, again turned towards our Government with a similar request. In this letter, amongst other matters, mention was made that Abyssinia wished for a Metropolitan, on whom hands had been laid by the Most Holy Synod. In other words, an offer was made to unite the Abyssinian Church with our own. This letter was forwarded to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, whence an answer was returned that this Ministry would hold no kind of relations with Abyssinia and knew nothing about her. It is true that our Diplomatic Department had had no dealings with Abyssinia, but twenty-five years earlier the Most Holy Cyril and Porphyry (famous explorers of holy places in the East) had raised the question of equipping a Russian mission to Abyssinia.

When, therefore, Russia paid no attention to the hand stretched out to her from the Red Sea littoral, Western Europe endeavoured, and is still endeavouring, to seize there everything which it is possible to get, at whatever cost.

With the piercing of the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the countries thereto adjacent have again acquired the same degree of importance as they had before the adoption of the maritime route to India round the Cape of Good Hope, since through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea runs the main artery of the trade relations of the Colonial Powers of the West.

In order to appreciate the transcendent importance of this route as regards the trade of the Colonial Powers of Europe, we must dwell upon a characteristic feature of the development of this trade, and we must lay special stress on England, and on the conclusions which we shall arrive at with regard to her, whilst we refer, in a less marked way, to other Western Powers as well.

Contemporary England derives her power from the vast trade which is developed by her industries and from the sap of her numerous rich colonies. But these sources of her power constitute also her "Achilles' heel." The manufacturing activity of England has not developed in

¹ See *Russki Vaistnik* (*Russian Messenger*) of 1884, and an article headed "What is Abyssinia and what do the Italians desire of her?"

proportion to the quantity of the raw products which are obtainable in the country itself, for that activity depends on the shipment of raw products from abroad and on the export of manufactured goods out of that raw produce so obtained. If it once became possible to arrest this transport of raw produce, and so to check the export of manufactured goods, then the mercantile and manufacturing industries of England would be so reduced that $\frac{1}{10}$ ths of her population would be without work, and therefore without bread, and then this now powerful State would be brought within the range of such heavy economic crimes and such colossal popular disturbances as, we make bold to say, Europe will have never seen the like.

England fully understands¹ the thorough danger of her position, and though she has not the power to cut the evil at its very root, she adopts various palliatives in her anxiety to place the well-being of her rapidly-increasing population and the prosperity of her industries as far as possible outside the pale of all contingencies. With this object she is ever on the look-out to acquire as large a number as possible of safe coaling-stations along the routes usually adopted by her mercantile vessels, and to fortify these and to store them with supplies of coal. With such an object she has of late devoted serious attention to seizing the Suez Canal and the prolongation of that water-way, the Red Sea. It is needless to speak of the importance which these two navigable routes have for England. In fact, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea might have a decisive importance in the event of England coming into collision with any Power that had succeeded in establishing itself in either of these two waters. If the Canal, for instance, were not at all times open to her, England would, in case of war, be placed at a military disadvantage, as she would be deprived of the possibility of using the shortest navigable route; and her mercantile navy would then be obliged to adopt the circuitous and dangerous route round Africa, whereon the naval stations belonging to England lie at huge distances apart, and throughout the whole of which privateers might freely cruise (for the employment of such vessels has not been finally got rid of), to say nothing of an enemy's heavily armed and swift war-vessels.²

Although England possesses a most powerful war fleet,³ this constitutes her sole material strength, and on it would be placed too many duties in the shape of conducting hostile operations and guarding colonies, so that to take upon itself the convoy of merchant-steamers and sailing-ships would be simply out of the question. Exposed then as it would be to momentary attacks, the mercantile fleet of England would either become largely reduced or confined to its own waters. And either

¹ Query, does she?—W. E. G.

² During the American Civil War the "Alabama" showed what might be done by a single cruiser having an energetic captain and a capable crew.

³ But even this idea is now open to doubt in the face of the rapid development of the American and French, and even the German, fleets; for *in a proportionate sense* these may be said to even now threaten the supremacy of the English fleet, which in the eyes of the English themselves is losing some of its former glamour.

alternative would suffice to deprive the long-proud Britons of all possibility of maintaining an active foreign policy.

The importance, then, which in all its comprehensiveness the Red Sea, with its littoral, has for England applies also in a greater or lesser degree to the other Colonial Powers of Western Europe. It is manifest, therefore, why, by hook or by crook, Europeans are using every endeavour to establish themselves on these shores.¹

The English occupy Aden, Ceylon, and Perim, which really commands the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb (whilst Aden does not), and they have established their influence over Egypt. In 1862 the French bought of the Danakili, for the sum of 10,000 *thalers*, Sahalo and Obok, in the Gulf of Tajura, and by the year 1880 they had become possessed of almost the whole of the Gulf of Tajura. They are now endeavouring, but hitherto without success, to occupy the island of Dessi, which is close to Maszowah. At the present time more than 3,000 square *kilomètres* of territory belong to the French in the neighbourhood of the shores of the Gulf of Tajura. One French traveller has even succeeded in obtaining from King Menelek a concession for a railway from Obok to Ankobar.² And in 1880 the Spaniards tried to get possession of Annesley Bay, but their one effort to

¹ I will here adduce a characteristic example of English dexterity and unscrupulousness. The East India Company of pious memory were in need of a coaling station. At that time the strategical importance of Aden as commanding the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb had just become apparent, and so practical navigators determined to get possession of such a point, at whatever cost. At first they thought of taking it by force, but then the possibility of a collision with Turkey induced them to resort to a more dexterous method. A large vessel named the "Daria-Daulet," sailing under the British flag, was designedly sunk by the English off the Aden coast. The Arabs of course plundered the vessel, murdered the greater part of the crew and carried off the women who were on board. The British Government sent Captain Keen to Aden with demands for satisfaction for the insult offered to the British flag, and for an indemnity for the loss thereby occasioned. Captain Keen was directed to at first threaten the Sultán of Aden, and then to try and induce him to sell the port. The Sultán agreed to pay the cost of the sunken vessel, and Captain Keen, having very prudently received the money, proceeded to negotiate for the purchase of Aden, and the lands adjacent to it. The Sultán was not disinclined to sell the port in return for the money which Captain Keen had already received for the sunken ship, plus 12,500 rupees as compensation for the loss of shipping dues. In this sense, an act of transfer was accordingly prepared. But here occurred something which was not a little extraordinary. Captain Keen's interpreter stole the Sultán's seal used here as elsewhere throughout the East in place of a signature, and an impression thereof was affixed to the deed, which thus acquired a lawful force, notwithstanding the fact that not a shilling was ever paid. The brave captain, with the completed deed in his pocket and the money also, then hastened to leave Aden without even waiting for a farewell audience with the Sultán. But at that time one of the pashas, subject to Mahomet-Ali, began to threaten Aden. England then offered the Sultán her assistance, an offer which he readily accepted, and the town was immediately occupied by a British garrison. Thus *de facto* and *de jure* Aden became British without any special outlay. Needless to add that the owner of the sunken ship received no sort of remuneration.

² See my translation headed "Obok and the Country bordering on the Gulf of Tajura" in the JOURNAL of May, 1897.—W. E. G.

secure a footing in this part of the world called forth a perfect storm in the columns of the English Press, and so it was abandoned. The Italians alone, with the co-operation of England, with whom they have entered into an agreement, have established themselves throughout the whole of the western coast-line of the Red Sea from Massowah on the north to the Sultanate of Rakheit on the south.

The Italians, too, long ago entered upon an active colonial policy on the shores of the Red Sea, for in the seventies the Steam Navigation Company "Rubattino" leased of the natives for a period of ten years a strip of coast-line near to Assab, in order to build there trading factories. And in 1880 the same company acquired this slice of territory in perpetuity. In 1882 it was declared to be an Italian colony, and every endeavour was made therefrom to establish regular trading relations with the towns of Shoa. The distance, however, from Assab to Ankobar involves a journey of about 35 days, and that circumstance impedes any active trade relations. If we add to the French station of Obok and to the Italian colony of Assab the English port of Zeila, then we shall see that three Abyssinian ports which might have served as windows overlooking the ocean for *Habesh* now belong to various nations of Europe.¹ But Abyssinia does not desire to take advantage of all these exits at the hands of a foreigner, but is rather endeavouring to reconquer the nearer to hand and more advantageously situated port of Massowah, which has been occupied by the Italians.

In the beginning of the year 1885, England, apprehensive of the uprising of a powerful native State on the shores of the Red Sea, such as Abyssinia might prove to be, made a way for herself in that direction, and in the desire to gain others in the struggle with the Soudán Dervishes, proposed to Italy that she should occupy the port of Massowah with the adjacent coast-line. Of course, she did not wish to allow another powerful State and one more interested in the fate of this route to get a hold in that direction, and indeed she only permitted Italy to do so as a factor in any political combination that might enable her to acquire, without any expenditure or special endeavours, fresh colonies that would otherwise call for the flow of still more blood and treasure.

In order to present a still clearer picture of the later events in the present struggle between Abyssinia and Italy, we must go back somewhat in the history of the relations of these two countries. As we all know, in the year 1882 England appeared in Egypt in the rôle of the introducer of order, and as the ally of the Khedive, or rather of his supporter, in the face of the burdensome political and economic conditions that had befallen his unhappy country. The appearance of the English, however, not only did not tend to pacify the country, but it brought it to a still worse state of disorder, for soon after the insurrection of Arabi-Pasha had been quelled, there arose the Mahdi as the new prophet of Islám, and he succeeded in wresting from the civilised world

¹ See note to my translation headed "Abyssinia: a brief sketch of its Geography and History" in the JOURNAL of May, 1896.—W. E. G.

the whole of the Egyptian Soudán, a province which in area is nearly equal to the fourth part of Europe. The pace and energy of the English then somewhat slackened. It is difficult to determine whether this was so, because the task of contending with the gradually extending burning religious fanaticism of the Dervishes seemed to England to be beyond her powers, or whether she did not consider it to her interest to too rapidly quench the torch of insurrection. But however this may be, she acted in an extremely vacillating manner, and what she did brought about no positive results. In all probability England perceived that to grapple with the Mahdi was not so easy an affair as to contend against Negus Theodore and the Khedive of Egypt, and therefore she began to withdraw the Egyptian garrisons from the scattered forts in the provinces which had been overtaken by the rebellion. Some of these forts, especially those on the borders of Abyssinia, were, however, so removed from the advanced English and Egyptian posts, that their defenders could not of course cut their way through the hordes under the banners of the Mahdi, and these were doomed to destruction. The British Government then turned to Ras-Azula, the detester of the Soudánese, and the almost entirely independent Viceroy of the province of Tigrè, with a request that he would relieve the besieged garrisons, and especially that of Kassala, in which there were some English as well as Egyptians. Ras-Azula, who was ready on his own account to enter into a struggle with the Mahdists, acceded to the request made, but demanded as a reward for so doing 15,000 Remington rifles, 10,000,000 cartridges, and a payment of one million francs. He also demanded the port of Massowah, which still nominally belonged to Egypt. As we have seen, from what has been already said, the entire importance of Massowah lies in this, that by it passes the chief caravan route into Abyssinia, and here also the waterless, sultry and unhealthy littoral has no greater breadth than from 40 to 50 *versets* ($26\frac{2}{3}$ to $33\frac{1}{3}$ miles).

The presentation on the part of Ras-Azula of a demand for the port of Massowah was a clear intimation that in Abyssinia they had thoroughly awoke to a complete perception of the thorough indispensableness of "a window and of a door into Europe." This awakening has a great signification. Indeed it may be said to herald the beginning of a new era in the political life of Abyssinia. Abyssinia, in fact, by seeking an exit towards the sea, has already become the competitor of England and of the other Colonial Powers of Europe who were endeavouring to establish themselves on the shores of the Red Sea. The interests of Abyssinia, supported by 100,000 rifles, would henceforth become interwoven with those of several of the European Powers. Thus, after many centuries of somnolence, Abyssinia will enter once more into the general channel of international life in the character of one of its prominent factors.

To all of Ras-Azula's demands the English assented, and he was immediately furnished with all that he had asked for in the way of arms, cartridges, and money. Accordingly, at the close of 1884, Ras-Azula at the head of a large army advanced against the Soudánese. After freeing

several forts from the Mahdists who were besieging them, and after despatching the garrisons with their families to Egypt *via* Massowah, Ras-Azula came at length to Kassala, but this place proved to have been already taken and its garrison had been massacred. After utterly defeating the Soudánese in a great battle, in which he took from them many breech-loading rifles, and after accomplishing all that he had undertaken with the English to do, Ras-Azula then set out for Massowah, but as he was still on the road he learnt that the practical English had found it to be more advantageous in respect of the fulfilment of their part of the agreement not to carry out the surrender of Massowah. One may picture to one's-self the sort of sympathy which the Abyssinians now nourish towards both England and Italy!

Massowah was at this time (5th January, 1885) occupied by a small Italian detachment, under the command of Colonel Saletta. The commander of the Egyptian garrison, which was there before the above date, protested, and the protest was forwarded to the Sublime Porte, but the subject at issue only led to a lengthened exchange of notes. By December 1885, not a single Egyptian soldier remained at Massowah, and the Egyptian standard, which up to this time had been flying beside that of the Italian, altogether disappeared.

In the summer too of the same year the Italian frigate "Esploratoré" took possession of the entire littoral from the peninsula of Buri up to Cape Darma, and by an official notification of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Robillant, it was announced that Italy had extended her sphere of influence on the Red Sea coast so as to cover an area of from 10 to 30 *kilomètres* in breadth and to 500 *kilomètres* in length.

Of course, Abyssinia could not remain indifferent to such a state of things, which really placed her in a state of economic dependence on Italy, and would in the future even threaten her real existence. In these days every country which enters into relations with civilised peoples, if it does not adapt itself to the general course of cultured existence, and does not strive to be on a level with the demands of the age in which it lives, loses its independence and becomes subject to its more civilised neighbours who stand, as it were, on a higher pinnacle of cultured development. The very safety of a people, which wishes to retain an independent existence amidst the civilisation which surrounds it, must cause it to adopt the path of free intercourse with more enlightened nations. In the present state of affairs, Abyssinia is cut off from the rest of the world. To the south, as we have already said, there stretch countries occupying a lower grade of development than that which she herself occupies. To the north and to the west lies Egypt, formerly contiguous to her, but now separated by a wave of insurrectionary Soudánese. There remains her Eastern boundary, but there, along the Red Sea coast, the Italians have established themselves, and the problem which they have set themselves is not to raise the intellectual life of the Abyssinians, but to take every possible advantage of the geographical position so gained to exploit the natural riches of the territories of the Negus. But in Abyssinia the knowledge has declared itself that it is

necessary to push through towards the rest of the world, and to a freer atmosphere. Hence from behind Massowah, Madre, Edda, Assab, and from behind these "windows overlooking Europe," there has begun, after an entire series of diplomatic ruptures and collisions, an armed struggle between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Ethiopia.

On the 25th January, 1887, Ras-Azula, in the capacity of an army leader of the Negus John, and at the head of a force of 5,000 Abyssinians, attacked Saati, the advanced post of the Italian forces occupying Massowah. This attack was repulsed. At the request of the commander of the Italian post, who expected a second attack, reinforcements were sent out from Massowah consisting (according to an official account) of three companies of infantry, and several machine guns with their crews, representing a total of 500 rank and file, and 24 officers.¹ When half way out of Massowah this body came upon the Abyssinians, and at once began to retire, with the object, it was said, of taking up a suitable position behind some rising ground; but when the Italians had occupied this, the Abyssinian troops surrounded them as with an iron band. The Italians soon shot away all their ammunition, and their machine guns got jammed, and then, after a three hours' fight, 78 rank and file and one officer of the Italian force were taken prisoners by the Abyssinians and the rest were amongst the slain.

Then, in order to restore the honour of their arms and also their prestige, which had fallen greatly in the eyes of the natives, the Italian Government decided upon a large expedition, which was intended to lay waste bold Abyssinia. Accordingly in the autumn of the same year (1887) a force of 18,000 selected Italian troops were despatched to Africa. It was evidently intended by the employment of so large a force not only to punish Abyssinia but to complete its subjugation. Moreover, with an amusing display of haste, it was thought to introduce Roman Catholicism into the country, and for this purpose as many as 50 missionary fathers accompanied the Italian army of invasion! In view of these obviously threatening preparations Abyssinia did not remain inactive. Three armies of the Negus, of a total strength of 70,000 men, armed with breech-loading rifles, were moved towards the joint frontier. A synod, which sat in session at the Monastery of Debra-Tabor, placed under a curse any one who should enter into relations with the enemies of the fatherland. The war thus became a popular war, and Negus John himself took the field. Even Menelek, King of Shoa, who had always shown sympathy towards the Italians and towards Roman Catholicism, dared not act against the general movement, and so he placed at the disposal of the Negus a body consisting of 8,000 men, excellently equipped by means of Italian money which he had received. The independent leader Debet, chief of the Bashi-Bazuks, who had been organised by the Italians out of the Abyssinian peoples dwelling on the frontier, followed Menelek's example. But all these warlike preparations

¹ Other unofficial sources of information gave the strength of the column as 2,000 altogether.

proved to be premature, because the Italian troops, under the command of General San Martsano, and the missionary fathers which were with them, sat quietly inside Massowah, and under the protection of their own guns died off through the ravages of dysentery!

An entire epoch passed away in this unintelligible and, from a military point of view, shameful inactivity, and with it came to an end all possibility of conducting military operations within the limits of Abyssinian territory. In the spring of the following year, in view of the setting in of the summer heats, considerable reinforcements arrived for the Italian forces from the fatherland, and yet there were only *inconsiderable garrisons on African soil.*

Still their inaction afforded no evidence that the Italians had completely abandoned the thought of retaliation and of fresh seizure of Abyssinian territory. On the contrary, it may be said that such inactivity was only proof of the existence of doubts on the part of the Italians of the possibility of attaining their object with the comparatively insufficient resources at the disposal of General San Martsano, at Massowah. These doubts were, indeed, fully justified. The Italians could not reckon on another such easy victory as had been gained by the English in the Anglo-Abyssinian Campaign of 1867-68; since the English in that campaign had not waged war with the Abyssinian nation, but only with the Negus Theodore, who had incurred the hatred of his own subjects. Moreover, the English had not then attempted to interfere with the freedom of the country or with its welfare. Their sole desire was to put an end to the frenzies of a man who thought he was acting aright. In doing this they merely carried out what the people themselves were prepared to do. Herein, therefore, lay the explanation of the fact that the English did not encounter the very slightest opposition up to the very ascent to the Arraga plateau, which lay at a distance of more than 600 *kilomètres* from the place of the debarkation of their troops. And herein alone is the explanation to be found as to why the rulers of Tigrè and of Lasta, who together could have opposed them with 100,000 men, not merely did not threaten the English Expeditionary Force of 12,000 men, but even assisted it and supplied it with all which it required. If, therefore, England had attained so easily the object which she had in view, the causes of this fact lay exclusively in the absence of all desire on the part of the mass of the Abyssinian people to oppose her. But Italy could not count on any similar conditions. By encroaching on the welfare and the independence of Abyssinia she had roused the hatred of the entire population, every warrior of which, to say nothing of every male, would be ready to offer her the most determined resistance. If, therefore, Italy should forget the examples of the past, she would be compelled to face a state of things not, indeed, especially *comforting* for her, but one which more closely resembled her present position. This similarity was to be found in the ill-fated campaign of the Egyptians in 1875, when the Abyssinians, then armed almost entirely with weapons of cold steel, destroyed a force composed of 30,000 men armed with Remington rifles. Moreover, since that period many waters had flowed

and Abyssinia had not spent the time in vain. Now her troops are armed with breech-loading rifles, of which there are more than 100,000 in the country. As to comparisons with European organisations and to the equipment of armies under the leadership to a great extent, at least, of Europeans, the Abyssinians, as they awaited the Italian advance, had no anxiety whatever.

It may be said that Nature herself has rendered Abyssinia capable of conducting indefinitely a defensive warfare. The whole country¹ consists of elevated mountain plateaux (*ambas*),² which are abundantly supplied with water, and which are covered with gardens, luxuriant pasture lands, and cultivated fields, which yield two harvests in the year. Such natural fortresses (that of Gunib, for example) are separated from each other by deep gorges and river beds, along which giddy precipices afford the sole method of communication. In many places access to the summits of these *ambas* is possible only with the aid of scaling ladders. It is true that there are fairly good footways between the capital of the petty sovereignty of Gondar and Massowah and from both these points to Magdâla, but these wretched tracks are not practicable for either wheeled transport or for field artillery. The conduct then of offensive warfare in such a country is evidently not an easy undertaking. Nor was General San Martsano's army corps equal to the task.

Properly speaking, there are at the disposal of Italy only two methods of waging war against Abyssinia. The first of these consists in sending two bodies of troops into the country, one behind the other, and so dividing the Italian forces, as the English in fact did theirs. But in this case the absence of roads suitable for wheeled transport would compel the Italians to have a proper amount of pack animals. And for these they would have to carry the necessary forage with them, since the people of the country would lose no time in burning all the local supplies rather than leave anything to fall into the hands of the hated invaders. In the face of such conditions, pack transport would have to be furnished on a colossal scale, and being necessarily scattered over a large area the greater part of an army of invasion would be employed, not in mere fighting, but in guarding its own pack animals.³ Even if we allow that

¹ See note at foot of page 3 of my translation headed "Abyssinia: a brief sketch of its Geography and History" in the JOURNAL of May, 1896.—W. E. G.

² See note to my translation headed "Abyssinia: a brief sketch of its Geography and History."—W. E. G.

³ In 1868, the English employed for an army of 12,000 combatants, 14,000 non-combatants, and of these only 3,000 reached Magdâla for the infliction of the decisive blow. The remainder were occupied at the several fortified depôts, or were employed on the lines of communication. This too was at a time when these lines of communication ran, as we have already explained, through a country occupied by a population that was distinctly friendly. The Italians could not count on like conditions. Consequently in their case the disproportion of operating troops to non-combatants would be immense, and would be distinctly unfavourable. Even if we adhere to the proportionate figures to be found in Sir Robert Napier's Expedition, we shall find that in order to dispose of 25,000 free troops for service in the field, Italy must send for the invasion of Abyssinia not 18,000 but 100,000 soldiers.

the Italians might succeed in defeating one Abyssinian army (but it is not easy to say so, looking to the sorry fate which has overtaken more than one Egyptian Expedition), they would, whilst scattered over the country, be at once confronted with another that would be ready for a fresh contest. The Abyssinian organisation cannot be broken, for, properly speaking, it cannot be said to exist. In its place we find the existence of a love of war, general cheeriness, and a universal hatred for an enemy, everything in fact which tends to ensure the success of a guerilla style of warfare. The brief period (the summer months) in which alone it is possible to conduct military operations in Abyssinia, cannot be considered but as an unfavourable condition, for it is evident that within the compass of such a limited season no decisive results could be attained.

The other method of warfare open to the Italians would seem to be incomparably more sure. This consists in the adaptation of the principles which we Russians worked out in the subjugation of the Caucasus. The invading troops would then have to gradually occupy the country, keeping to the natural limits as defined by the several mountain ranges, each of which would have to be crowned with fortified positions. After fortifying in turn every zone so defined, and connecting the whole line of communication by means of bridges, roads, and supply stores, another line of operations would then be entered upon and completed in like manner.¹ But this method would entail a lengthened strain on an army's resources, and for such a method the resources of Italy are not at all adapted. The task of trying to carry out such a system of warfare would weaken her position in Europe, where she is already confronted with very formidable undertakings, and where she, in her desire to play the part of a great Power, might bring upon herself certain obligations that would demand, in the perhaps not distant future, all her superfluous energy.

Be this, however, as it may, Italy, judging by what we read in the newspapers, is actively preparing for a fresh Abyssinian expedition on a large scale. But we think, without giving ourselves credit for the gift of prophecy, it may be foretold that the descendants of the great conquerors of the ancient world will not, even so, have any success. After several unavoidable failures the warlike fervour of Italy will cool, and she, without having on the shores of the Red Sea any vital interests whatever, will readily, it may be supposed, enter upon a series of compromises,² satisfactory only for the sake of the preservation of her dignity, and she will end in possessing some sort of Abyssinian port further south, such as Assab or Edda, but she will not always continue to hold Massowah.

If, however, contrary to our belief, the Italian troops remain satisfied with results already attained, and confine themselves to the shores of the

¹ In order to subjugate the mountainous country of the Caucasus, which has a depth of only about 300 *versets* (200 miles) Russia was employed for a period of 100 years, and this, too, under incomparably more favourable conditions than Italy would encounter. The mountaineers of the Caucasus were split up into numerous hostile tribes, and their armament was extremely bad.

² As a precedent we may cite recent events in Indo-China.

Red Sea and give up all idea of advancing further inland, then, impelled by the force of circumstances, Abyssinia might herself assume the offensive, because for her the struggle constitutes a vital question. But in that case, according to our deep conviction, the end will be the same as the beginning, and it will not be Italy that will remain the gainer.

And yet, if the importance for Western Europe of the Red Sea and of the countries thereto adjacent is immense, it is of great importance, too, for Russia, although at first sight she has lesser interests in both the Red Sea and in Abyssinia. Nevertheless, the maintenance of Russian influence in Abyssinia must not be lost sight of. As to the question of any Colonies, that is one about which, though there may be still disputes, it may be said that the possession of any such would not bring in any distinct gain to Russia.

By establishing her influence in Abyssinia, Russia would become the neighbour of Egypt. Now Egypt, as the vassal of Turkey, has always furnished an auxiliary corps for service in the ranks of the Turkish Army. In other words, she has helped to strengthen our opponent. In the future we should be able, if necessary, to come to the aid of Abyssinia by giving Egypt something to do at home and to paralyse her army.¹

At a given moment, with Egypt in the arms of England, Russia, by possessing a certain influence in Abyssinia, might compel her to occupy herself with her own affairs on the banks of the Nile.

Italy is a member of the triple "defensive" alliance which is directed against us. If, therefore, it were possible to draw off even a portion of her strength from the European theatre of war, that alone would constitute a substantial success for us. The enmity of Abyssinia towards Italy and her nearness to the Italian Colonies on the Red Sea would give us the power of easily effecting this.

There is no sort of doubt then that sooner or later war-like Abyssinia will make a way for herself towards the sea and will possess the entire western coast-line. Then we could easily acquire from her one of the southern ports that would be less needful to her. This port would have for us a deep signification as a coaling station, but still more as a source of perpetual threat to the welfare, and consequently to the power, of England.² Our torpedo-boats and cruisers could thence at any moment close to English merchant steamers the trade route through the Red Sea, and this would of course cut in half the trade relations of the English. The possibility thus afforded to us of closing this route would compel the proud Britons to considerably lower their tone, which is always and everywhere hostile to us, and it might do much to aid in the settlement of the Eastern Question in a sense that is to be desired by Russia.

Besides all this, as soon as Abyssinia had made a way for herself to

¹ Although at present the numerical strength of the Egyptian Army is infinitesimal, the question of its increase has been raised.

² And in a lesser degree to other Colonial Powers.

the sea her contact with civilised nations would induce her to introduce to her people a quantity of fresh necessities, and the supply of these would tend to greatly develop our own manufacturing industries, and might, indeed, place them in a peculiarly favourable position. On our part, we could get from Abyssinia colonial products at first hand. The opening up in this way of a fresh market would aid in developing and increasing all our mercantile operations, and this would act as a powerful stimulant on the welfare of our people and enhance the value of our currency.

All these are results to which we could attain by establishing our influence in Abyssinia. The question then arises : Is it possible for us to get this influence ? Yes, undoubtedly. More than once already has almost Orthodox Abyssinia, with her population of 800,000, and her great natural riches, stretched out her hand to us. As we have already said, quoting the testimony of Mons. Lejean, the French Consul at Massowah, in the year 1855 the Negus Theodore addressed a letter to the Emperor Nicholas I., offering to conclude an alliance against the Turks, and asking him to send to Abyssinia military instructors. Again, in 1874 and 1876, Negus John made fresh but fruitless efforts to enter into friendly relations with Russia. Once more, in 1879, it was said that the desire had been shown throughout Abyssinia to receive a Metropolitan upon whom hands had been laid by our Most Holy Synod. And in the summer of 1887, the foreign Press announced that at Massowah the Italians had detained an entire Abyssinian mission, which had been sent by the Negus to Russia with a request for assistance. All this, and the history of the Cossack Aschinoff's several receptions by the Negus, afford ample testimony that if Russia desires to do so she can easily establish and secure for herself in Abyssinia a strong position and acquire great influence in that country.

The deeper and the more varied the forms of our influence over the life of Abyssinia, the more solid, of course, will that influence become. Our engineers, mechanics, and craftsmen can build up there an industry, and our enterprise and skill can secure a hold on both the import and the export trade. This would give us the command of the economic life of Abyssinia. The appointment by our Holy Synod of an Abyssinian Metropolitan would surrender the country to us in a religious sense. The despatch of military instructors and the formation of a body of Abyssinian regular troops under the guidance of Russian officers would place in our hands the armed forces of the country. Having thus subjected Abyssinia to herself in an economic, religious, and military sense, Russia could extend her influence there to the desired limits, and the results of so doing would everywhere become apparent.

The present struggle between Abyssinia and Italy presents a suitable opportunity for us to lay the beginning of fresh relations. Under present circumstances not much would be needed to be done to cause the sympathy of Abyssinia towards Russia to grow to the desired degree. The acquirement of so vast an influence might, on the termination of the war, be extended so as to make itself felt also in the administration of

the country. This is, in short, an historical moment and one that should not be allowed to slip away.

The Russian author's interesting sketch of Abyssinia does not, unfortunately, embrace the period of the downfall of Italian ascendancy in this part of Africa, but what the future may have in store for the ancient Kingdom of Ethiopia can, to a certain extent, be forecast by carefully watching the drift of current events, and by noticing the great change which has come over this remarkable country since the period of the Anglo-Indian Campaign of 1867-68.—W. E. G.